

expired commodity, is labeled with the predetermined special mark, it is possible for an inventory employee to discriminate the particular commodity from commodities other than the particular commodity, with reference to images of the particular commodity and the other commodities, which images are displayed on the display means. The operator issues minimum and proper instructions (e.g., removing an expired commodity) to the clerk at the shop by transmitting the marked image (an image with attached additional information), in which an image of a particular commodity is labeled with the predetermined special mark, to the clerk from the remote management apparatus, realizing a further effective inventory system with reduced costs.

(8) The use of the security camera that is usually previously installed in the shop as a camera means realizes the tele-inventory system at a low cost.

(9) When the remote management terminal is a mobile information processing terminal, such as a mobile telephone, a company request a part-time-job employee to inventory the object commodities. Since the use of the mobile information processing terminal allows the company to reserve part-time-job employees that makes an inventory of the object commodities, it is possible

to eliminate the need for employees of the company and clerks at the shops working as inventory employee, greatly reducing the cost for inventorying the object commodities.

5 (10) If the remote management terminal is located at a remote place in a different time zone of a shop place where the shop is located, it is possible to hire the employees or part-time-job employee, who live in the remote place, as inventory employees. This enables the employees or the
10 part-time-job employee at the remote place to make inventory of the object commodities while the time zone in which the stores are located are in the nighttime hours, and it is possible to hire inventory
15 employees in areas or countries require lower labor cost thereby realizing the tele-inventory system with a reduced cost.

 (11) With the customer information terminal
20 that is communicably connected to the in-shop terminal, it is possible for a customer to obtain and see an image of a target commodity only by transmitting a direction containing the name of the target commodity from the customer information
25 terminal. As a result customers can confirm whether or not a target commodity is available at the shop in real time before going to the shop, thereby

receiving supplementary services.

Other objects and further features of the present invention will be apparent from the following detailed description when read in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a block diagram schematically showing a tele-inventory system according to a first embodiment;

FIG. 2 is a block diagram schematically showing a practical mode of the tele-inventory system of FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 is a diagram showing an arrangement of various elements of the tele-inventory system of FIG. 1;

FIGS. 4A and 4B are perspective views respectively showing the camera section of the tele-inventory system of FIG. 1;

FIG. 5A is a perspective view showing an overview of a manipulator section of the tele-inventory system of FIG. 1;

FIG. 5B is an enlarged perspective view showing the main part of the manipulator section of FIG. 5A;

FIG. 6 is a diagram showing a commodity